



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2021-0788; Project Identifier AD-2021-00489-T]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: The FAA proposes to adopt a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain The Boeing Company Model 737-700, -800, and -900ER series airplanes. This proposed AD was prompted by reports of incorrectly installed fuselage skin fasteners. This proposed AD would require a detailed inspection of a certain body station bulkhead, between certain stringers, for any incorrectly installed fastener common to fuselage skin, and applicable on-condition actions. The FAA is proposing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: The FAA must receive comments on this proposed AD by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may send comments, using the procedures found in 14 CFR 11.43 and 11.45, by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

- Fax: 202-493-2251.

- Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

- Hand Delivery: Deliver to Mail address above between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

For service information identified in this NPRM, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195. It is also available at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0788.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0788; or in person at Docket Operations between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this NPRM, any comments received, and other information. The street address for Docket Operations is listed above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lu Lu, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Seattle ACO Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3525; email: lu.lu@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

The FAA invites you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this proposal. Send your comments to an address listed under ADDRESSES. Include “Docket No. FAA-2021-0788; Project Identifier AD-2021-00489-T” at the beginning of your comments. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. The FAA

will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend this proposal because of those comments.

Except for Confidential Business Information (CBI) as described in the following paragraph, and other information as described in 14 CFR 11.35, the FAA will post all comments received, without change, to <https://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information you provide. The agency will also post a report summarizing each substantive verbal contact received about this NPRM.

Confidential Business Information

CBI is commercial or financial information that is both customarily and actually treated as private by its owner. Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552), CBI is exempt from public disclosure. If your comments responsive to this NPRM contain commercial or financial information that is customarily treated as private, that you actually treat as private, and that is relevant or responsive to this NPRM, it is important that you clearly designate the submitted comments as CBI. Please mark each page of your submission containing CBI as “PROPIN.” The FAA will treat such marked submissions as confidential under the FOIA, and they will not be placed in the public docket of this NPRM. Submissions containing CBI should be sent to Lu Lu, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Seattle ACO Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3525; email: lu.lu@faa.gov. Any commentary that the FAA receives which is not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this rulemaking.

Background

The FAA has received a report indicating incorrectly installed fasteners were found at the station (STA) 727 bulkhead between stringers S-22 and S-27. The fasteners, installed with a gap under the fastener head, were found at the STA 727 bulkhead common to fuselage skin, including the S-23 skin lap splice. Incorrectly installed

fasteners are suspected to exist on airplanes delivered within a certain time period. The FAA has confirmed that the fastener installation procedures were corrected on airplanes subsequently delivered. This condition was the result of incorrect procedures used to install affected fasteners during airplane production, which could result in incorrectly installed fasteners going undetected. Continuous operation of the airplane with incorrectly installed fasteners may generate fatigue cracking that could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane. Gaps under fastener heads will result in bending loads on the bulkhead chord that could cause chord failure and adjacent skin failure, resulting in reduced control of the airplane.

FAA's Determination

The FAA is issuing this NPRM after determining that the unsafe condition described previously is likely to exist or develop on other products of the same type design.

Related Service Information under 1 CFR Part 51

The FAA reviewed Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020. This service information specifies procedures for a detailed inspection for incorrectly installed fasteners at the STA 727 bulkhead outer chord common to the fuselage skin between stringers S-22 and S-27 on the left and right sides, and applicable on-condition actions. In addition to repair and replacement, on-condition actions include repetitive inspections for cracking of the fuselage skin between stringers S-22 and S-27; an open hole high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspection for cracking at all incorrectly installed fastener locations; and external and internal general visual inspections for repairs of the STA 727 bulkhead. On-condition actions also include repetitive HFEC and low frequency eddy current (LFEC) inspections in unrepaired areas for cracking of the inner skin from the wheel well; of the outer, upper, and lower chords from the wheel well; and of the fail-safe chord from the cargo compartment.

This service information is reasonably available because the interested parties have access to it through their normal course of business or by the means identified in ADDRESSES.

Proposed AD Requirements in this NPRM

This proposed AD would require accomplishing the actions specified in the service information already described except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this proposed AD. For information on the procedures and compliance times, see this service information at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0788.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD, if adopted as proposed, would affect 78 airplanes of U.S. registry. The FAA estimates the following costs to comply with this proposed AD:

Estimated costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
Inspections	13 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$1,105	\$0	\$1,105	\$86,190

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary actions that would be required based on the results of the proposed inspection. The agency has no way of determining the number of aircraft that might need these on-condition actions.

On-condition costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
Open hole HFEC inspections	21 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$1,785 per inspection cycle	\$0	\$1,785 per inspection cycle
HFEC and LFEC inspections	36 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$3,060 per inspection cycle	\$0	\$3,060 per inspection cycle

The FAA has included all known costs in its cost estimate. According to the manufacturer, however, some or all of the costs of this proposed AD may be covered under warranty, thereby reducing the cost impact on affected operators.

Authority for this Rulemaking

Title 49 of the United States Code specifies the FAA's authority to issue rules on aviation safety. Subtitle I, section 106, describes the authority of the FAA Administrator. Subtitle VII: Aviation Programs, describes in more detail the scope of the Agency's authority.

The FAA is issuing this rulemaking under the authority described in Subtitle VII, Part A, Subpart III, Section 44701: General requirements. Under that section, Congress charges the FAA with promoting safe flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing regulations for practices, methods, and procedures the Administrator finds necessary for safety in air commerce. This regulation is within the scope of that authority because it addresses an unsafe condition that is likely to exist or develop on products identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

The FAA determined that this proposed AD would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This proposed AD would not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify this proposed regulation:

- (1) Is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866,
- (2) Would not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska, and
- (3) Would not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA proposes to amend 14 CFR part 39 as follows:

PART 39 - AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. The FAA amends § 39.13 by adding the following new airworthiness directive:

The Boeing Company: Docket No. FAA-2021-0788; Project Identifier AD-2021-489-T.

(a) Comments Due Date

The FAA must receive comments on this airworthiness directive (AD) by
[INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL
REGISTER].

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to The Boeing Company Model 737-700, -800, and -900ER series airplanes, certificated in any category, and identified in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020.

(d) Subject

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 53, Fuselage.

(e) Unsafe Condition

This AD was prompted by reports of incorrectly installed fuselage skin fasteners. The FAA is issuing this AD to address incorrectly installed fasteners. This condition, if not addressed, could result in incorrectly installed fasteners going undetected. Continuous

operation of the airplane with undetected incorrectly installed fasteners may generate fatigue cracking that could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane.

(f) Compliance

Comply with this AD within the compliance times specified, unless already done.

(g) Required Actions

Except as specified by paragraph (h) of this AD: At the applicable times specified in the “Compliance” paragraph of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020, do all applicable actions identified in, and in accordance with, the Accomplishment Instructions of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020.

Note 1 to paragraph (g): Guidance for accomplishing the actions required by this AD can be found in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1384, dated September 10, 2020, which is referred to in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020.

(h) Exceptions to Service Information Specifications

(1) Where the “Effectivity” paragraph and the Condition and Compliance Time columns of the tables in the “Compliance” paragraph of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020, use the phrase “the Original Issue date of Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB,” this AD requires using “the effective date of this AD.”

(2) Where Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1384 RB, dated September 10, 2020, specifies contacting Boeing for repair instructions or for alternative inspections: This AD requires doing the repair, or doing the alternative inspections and applicable on-condition actions, using a method approved in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (i) of this AD.

(i) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Seattle ACO Branch, FAA, has the authority to approve AMOCs for this AD, if requested using the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19. In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, send your request to your principal inspector or responsible Flight Standards Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the manager of the certification office, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (j)(1) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-ANM-Seattle-ACO-AMOC-Requests@faa.gov.

(2) Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the responsible Flight Standards Office.

(3) An AMOC that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used for any repair, modification, or alteration required by this AD if it is approved by The Boeing Company Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) that has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO Branch, FAA, to make those findings. To be approved, the repair method, modification deviation, or alteration deviation must meet the certification basis of the airplane, and the approval must specifically refer to this AD.

(j) Related Information

(1) For more information about this AD, contact Lu Lu, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Seattle ACO Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3525; email: lu.lu@faa.gov.

(2) For service information identified in this AD, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 2200 South 216th St.,

Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195.

Issued on September 9, 2021.

Lance T. Gant, Director,
Compliance & Airworthiness Division,
Aircraft Certification Service.

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